

## Message Text

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ACTION EB-07

INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 ISO-00 AGR-05 CEA-01 CIAE-00 COME-00

DODE-00 FRB-03 H-02 INR-07 INT-05 L-03 LAB-04 NSAE-00

NSC-05 PA-01 AID-05 CIEP-01 SS-15 STR-04 ITC-01

TRSE-00 USIA-06 PRS-01 SP-02 OMB-01 AGRE-00 /086 W

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R 032258Z SEP 76

FM AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5007

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAGR, EPAP, CS

SUBJECT: CONSULTATIONS ON THE MEAT IMPORT PROGRAM

FROM THE AMBASSADOR

REF: SAN JOSE 4281

1. REFTEL REPORTED ON THE CARRYING OUT OF CONSULTATIONS CONCERNING US-COSTA RICAN MEAT TRADE WITH OFFICIALS OF THE GOCR AND REPRESENTATIVES OF PRIVATE INDUSTRY HERE, AND NOTED THAT THEY HAD PROCEEDED AS SMOOTHLY AS POSSIBLE UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES. THE DEPARTMENT'S REPRESENTATIVE, MR. PAUL TAYLOR, HANDLED THE US END OF THE DISCUSSIONS WELL, AND THE COSTA RICANS AT THE TABLE WERE CALM AND RESPONSIBLE. HOWEVER, IT WOULD BE ERRONEOUS TO CONCLUDE THAT THE CIVILIZED DEMEANOR OF THE COSTA RICAN PARTICIPANTS REFLECTED A LACK OF CONCERN OVER THE IMPENDING CUT-OFF OF US MEAT IMPORTS FROM HERE OR A LESSENING OF COSTA RICAN UNHAPPINESS OVER THE USG'S INABILITY TO ACCOMMODATE THEIR REPEATED REQUEST FOR A HIGHER VRS LEVEL.

2. WHILE IT WOULD HAVE BEEN CONTRARY TO TRADITIONAL  
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COSTA RICAN POLITENESS TO MENTION IT, THE EMBASSY IS CERTAIN

THAT THE TIMING OF THE CONSULTATIONS (I.E., ONE DAY BEFORE THE ANTICIPATED DATE OF PUBLICATION OF THE SEC. 204 PROCLAMATION) COULD ONLY BE TAKEN HERE TO MEAN THAT THE USG VIEWED THE CONSULTATIONS NOT AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO EXCHANGE VIEWS AND INFORMATION BUT AS AN OCCASION TO NOTIFY COSTA RICA OF AN IRREVOCABLE USG MOVE LEADING TO THE CUT-OFF OF MEAT IMPORTS. THIS WAS PARTICULARLY GRACELESS BECAUSE THE PROVISION FOR CONSULTATIONS IN THE BILATERAL MEAT AGREEMENT WAS MADE BY U.S. AND NOT MODIFIED IN ANY WAY BY THE COSTA RICANS. SINCE WE HAD SUGGESTED THE CONSULTATIONS, WE SHOULD HAVE MADE A SERIOUS ATTEMPT TO CARRY THEM OUT BEFORE MAKING A DEFINITIVE MOVE TOWARD THE CUT-OFF OF IMPORTS FROM COSTA RICA.

3. UNFORTUNATELY, THIS RATHER EMPTY LAST-MINUTE GESTURE THE DAY BEFORE THE ANNOUNCEMENT IS LIKELY TO FORTIFY WHAT THE COSTA RICANS ALREADY PERCEIVE AS A USG DISREGARD FOR THEIR PROBLEMS AND, BY EXTENSION, THOSE OF OTHER SMALL MEAT EXPORTING NATIONS. IT STILL RANKLES HERE THAT THE USG INITIALLY RAISED THE POSSIBILITY OF A REGIONAL SHORT-FALL REALLOCATION SCHEME AS PART OF THE 1976 MEAT AGREEMENT, AND THEN WITHDREW THAT FEATURE AT THE DEMAND OF AUSTRALIA. THAT ACTION, TOGETHER WITH REJECTION OF A PROPOSAL TO LEAVE UNSPECIFIED HOW SHORT-FALLS SHOULD BE REALLOCATED, WAS READ BY THE COSTA RICANS AS A CLEAR SIGN THAT OUR MEAT AGREEMENTS ARE NEGOTIATED WITH THE LARGE PRODUCERS AND ARE IMPOSED ON THE SMALL PRODUCERS. THIS PERCEPTION WAS STRENGTHENED SUBSEQUENTLY WHEN THE GOCR WAS MADE TO UNDERSTAND THAT ITS FAILURE TO SIGN OUR PROPOSED AGREEMENT COULD LEAD TO MANDATORY QUOTAS. THE QUESTION HERE WAS WHY DID THE U.S. NOT THREATEN AUSTRALIA WITH QUOTAS WHEN THAT COUNTRY REFUSED TO SIGN AN AGREEMENT UNTIL THE REGIONAL SHORT-FALL REALLOCATION SCHEME WAS EXCISED.

4. THE COSTA RICAN IMPRESSION OF A LARGE-COUNTRY BIAS IN OUR GLOBAL MEAT PROGRAM IS ALSO STRENGTHENED BY WHAT IS VIEWED HERE AS VERY SLOW USG ACTION TO STOP SHIPMENTS OF AUSTRALIAN MEAT TO THE U.S. THROUGH MAYAQUEZ AND PANAMA, AND TO CANADA IN ORDER TO FREE CANADIAN BEEF FOR SHIPMENT TO U.S., THEREBY EFFECTIVELY CIRCUMVENTING THE PROGRAM'S RESTRAINT LEVEL.

5. NONE OF THE ABOVE WOULD HAVE A LASTING HARMFUL EFFECT WERE THE USG IN A POSITION TO HONOR WHAT THE GOCR REGARDS AS A COMMIT-LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MENT TO INCREASE ITS VRS LEVEL OR IN SOME WAY ARRANGE TO BUY MORE MEAT FROM COSTA RICA. HOWEVER, PARTICULARLY BECAUSE OF OUR DIFFICULTY IN MEETING THE GOCR REQUEST FOR INCREASED EXPORTS, IT WAS IMPORTANT THAT WE TAKE GREAT CARE TO AVOID ADDING INSULT TO INJURY. TIMING OUR CONSULTATIONS SO AS TO ALMOST COINCIDE WITH ANTICIPATED PUBLICATION OF THE SEC. 204 PROCLAMATION DID NOT REFLECT THE CONCERN AND RESPECT THAT SHOULD CHARACTERIZE ALL OF OUR DEALINGS WITH THIS FRIENDLY AND COOPERATIVE GOVERNMENT.

WHILE IT PROBABLY IS TOO LATE TO REPAIR THE DAMAGE THIS TIME, WE  
CAN ONLY HOPE THAT ENOUGH CARE AND CONCERN WILL BE SHOWN IN THE  
FUTURE TO AVOID A SIMILAR SITUATION.  
TODMAN

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** IMPORTS, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, MEATS  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 03 SEP 1976  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** ElyME  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1976SANJO04340  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** N/A  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Film Number:** D760336-0471  
**From:** SAN JOSE  
**Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Image Path:**  
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**Legacy Key:** link1976/newtext/t19760992/aaaadbbs.tel  
**Line Count:** 119  
**Locator:** TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM  
**Office:** ACTION EB  
**Original Classification:** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 3  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Previous Classification:** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** 76 SAN JOSE 4281  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** ElyME  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 19 JUL 2004  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <19 JUL 2004 by coburnhl>; APPROVED <27 OCT 2004 by ElyME>  
**Review Markings:**

Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
04 MAY 2006

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** CONSULTATIONS ON THE MEAT IMPORT PROGRAM FROM THE AMBASSADOR  
**TAGS:** EAGR, EPAP, CS, US  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006